

Moraine Lodge (Moraine Park Visitor Center)
Bear Lake Road
Rocky Mountain National Park
Estes Park Vicinity
Larimer County
Colorado

HABS No. CO-78

HABS
COLO
35-ESPK.V,
3-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MORaine LODGE
(MORaine PARK VISITOR CENTER)

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Location: Bear Lake Road
Rocky Mountain National Park
Estes Park Vicinity
Larimer County
Colorado

Present Owner: National Park Service
Department of the Interior

Present Use: The building is now called the Moraine Park Visitor Center and serves as the principal museum of Rocky Mountain National Park.

Statement of Significance:

The Moraine Lodge, built in 1923, served until 1931 as the central building of Mrs. Imogene McPherson's summer resort and as the center of social activities by the summer residents of Moraine Park. Dances and other social activities were held here. The building was never used as formal sleeping quarters for guests visiting the resort. This structure is the last building remaining that was associated with the resorts of Moraine Park. Moraine Park was for many years the center of resorts in Rocky Mountain National Park area before and after the park was created in 1915. The United States purchased the lodge in 1931, remodeled it, and since 1937 the building has served as the principal museum of Rocky Mountain National Park.

PART I. HISTORIC INFORMATION

A. Physical History

Date of Construction: 1923

Architect/Designer: McPherson

Quad: Long's Peak, Colorado

UTM: 13/450500/4467500

8. Historical Narrative

The first Euro-American residents of Moraine Park moved to the valley in 1875. By the turn of the century, tourists became appreciative of the beauties of Moraine Park and, as a result, the dude ranch and resort industry was established for their accommodation, including the development of Moraine Lodge.

On February 6, 1899, M. Imogene Green homesteaded the land on which the Moraine Lodge now sits. Miss Green - later Mrs. W.H. McPherson - gradually constructed cabins for summer rental and developed a resort center in the northeast area of Moraine Park. Like other lodge owners, Mrs. McPherson's lodge and land remained private property within Rocky Mountain National Park after the park's creation in 1915.

The completed lodge was opened to the public in an elaborate ceremony on July 19, 1923, as noted in the Estes Park Trail of the following week:

Very elaborate ceremonies ushered the fine new rustic assembly hall just completed at Moraine Lodge into the center of the social activities of the popular resort, Thursday evening of last week.

The spacious hall was beautifully decorated for the occasion and good orchestra music made the evening very pleasant.

The new building, just inside the gate to the Lodge grounds, contains the business offices and a nice tea room on the ground floor and the hall occupies the entire second floor.

Prof. L.A. Wilkins, a regular guest at the Lodge for a number of years . . . was master of ceremonies, and handled the entire program very cleverly. He also gave a brief talk on the unseen forces at the Lodge, introducing the cooks, the [sic] each attired in the uniform of their rank.

Prof. Wilkins introduced Editor A. Scott, of the Iola (Kansas) Register, who with his family always spend a portion of the summer

at the Lodge, the Park being his home twenty-five years ago, who in a very interesting manner gave a history of Moraine Park and the Lodge and paid an excellent tribute to Mrs. Imogene McPherson, who for many years conducted the Lodge. Mrs. McPherson then gave an address of welcome to the guests of the evening and told briefly of the progress of the Lodge in the business life of the community.

Although the photographic evidence is scanty, it appears that in the historic period there were nearly a dozen cabins in the Moraine Lodge resort, sited roughly in a half circle opening to the south with the surviving building at its center. Most of the buildings appear to have been of frame construction, faced with slabs. Some may have been made of logs, and one photograph shows a corner of what appears to be a tent house. The National Park Service demolished these structures between 1932 and 1937.

The demolition of these structures was due to two National Park Service policies begun in 1918. At this time, Director Horace M. Albright instituted a National Park Service policy which aimed at purchasing all private holdings within the national parks. The second policy was specific to Rocky Mountain National Park, and instilled by the park's superintendent, Edmund Rogers. This policy aimed at preserving the natural scenic beauty of Rocky Mountain National Park, especially along Trail Ridge Road and the other new highways, and to create preserves for deer and elk. In order to achieve this policy's objectives, many of the park's resort buildings were torn down.

As a result of these two policies, there were many boundary extensions and acquisitions of inholdings during the period of 1931 to the mid-1950's. For instance, the Federal Government had acquired or was in the process of acquiring more than 3,000 acres of land in Moraine, Beaver, Horseshoe and Tuxedo Parks in the areas surrounding Trail Ridge Road and Bear Lake Roads.

Thus, after the acquisition and subsequent demolition of many of the resort buildings, only a few historically significant structures of the dude ranching and resort industries remain within Rocky Mountain National Park, one of which is the Moraine Lodge.

The United States acquired Moraine Lodge from the McPherson estate in 1931, and the National Park Service began planning to convert the building into a museum and auditorium. In 1934, the superintendent of Rocky Mountain National Park wrote, "In the hope that action would be taken on the renovation of the Moraine Park Auditorium and its creation into a museum, plans were drawn up during the winter." By 1935, the work was nearing completion: "During the year just past the amusement hall of old Moraine Lodge was reconditioned for museum use. By the end of the fiscal year much progress had been made, and it was estimated that another month would put the building in readiness for occupancy."

The Superintendent was overly optimistic; opening of the museum was delayed by the completion of the outdoor amphitheater and the parking lot. It appears that the museum was opened to the public in early summer, probably June of 1937, since the Superintendent observed on June 30 that the museum should be operating at full efficiency by August of that year. The museum exhibit cases were set against the outside wall of the second floor room; the room also served as an auditorium for evening programs. The National Park Service stopped using the space as an auditorium around 1960, and installed new centrally grouped exhibits around 1970.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Information

Architectural Merit and Interest:

Moraine Lodge is the last remaining structure in Moraine Park typifying summer resort development in Rocky Mountain National Park. The Lodge is an important contributor to the architectural and historical character of the Pioneer Settlement and the Resort Industry themes. One interesting feature is the balcony surrounding the chimney. In the historic period, the sole access to this balcony was gained from an interior balcony, which overlooked the dance hall. A door from the interior balcony opened up to a narrow stairway, which lead to the outside balcony.

The second floor contains a large, two-story rustic room with a "cathedral" ceiling supported by four massive log trusses. The trusses are notched and toenailed except for critical intersections which are joined by steel bolts. Throughout the second floor the structural logs - smoothed and varnished - form the inside finish.

Condition of Fabric: Good.

Summary Description:

Moraine Lodge, sited on the hillside of a glacial moraine, is a 2 1/2 story structure. The front facade faces southwest. The concrete, walk-out basement is faced with uncoursed rubblestones, and the upper floor is of false-cornered log construction.

B. Detailed Description of Exterior

Foundation: Low, 0'-0", to high 8'-6" of uncoursed fieldstone. Buttressed at corners.

Wall Construction: False-cornered log construction with the log ends projecting approximately twenty-one inches from the structure.

Structural Systems: Basement is concrete; upper story is log.

Porches, Stoops, Etc.: The lodge has three porches or stoops. A two story, gable-roofed "viewing porch", located on the front of the building, is supported by log columns. This second story has been enclosed with large fixed pane windows. The first story of this log porch forms a porte-cochere for the main entrance. The second porch is a wood platform stoop located on the northwest side. Ten wooden steps lead to this porch providing access to an exterior door on the third level. The third porch is a stoop of uncoursed fieldstone also on the northwest side.

Openings, Doorways, and Windows: There are four single doors into the building all made of vertical wood boards. Two are on the front facade and two are on the northwest side.

The Lodge has fifteen six-over-six double-hung sash windows, and nine windows are eight or sixteen light casements. Seven windows on the second story of the front, two story porch are large, fixed pane. All windows have rectangular, wood frames. The windows which are under the porte-cochere have been covered with masonite since their location conflicted with museum functions.

Roof - Shape and Covering: The gabled roof is broken on the southwest slope by two shed-roofed dormers, each with twelve-light horizontal fixed pane windows. The roof is covered with wood shingles and has exposed log rafter ends. Gutters and downspouts are on the front facade.

C. Detailed Description of Interior

Floor Plans: The first floor, which in the historic period contained the office of the Moraine Lodge as well as a tearoom and kitchen, has been remodeled to provide space for a reception counter and sales area, restrooms, a workroom, and an exhibit room containing display cases of habitat groups.

The second floor contains a large, two-story rustic room originally used for dances and various social gatherings. It has been remodeled for use as a museum display area.

Stairways: A narrow, wooden stairway leads to the outside balcony built to surround the chimney which, is centered on the northwest end of the building.

There is also a main staircase from the basement to the upper floor.

Flooring: Carpet covers the floors.

Wall and Ceiling Finishes: Walls are plasterboard and exposed logs. The ceiling is plasterboard downstairs and exposed log upstairs.

D. Site and Surroundings

Moraine Lodge is sited on the hillside of a glacial moraine at the edge of a ponderosa pine forest. The site is open with native grasses, soils, and scattered pines. Long's Peak & Moraine Park are to the southwest.

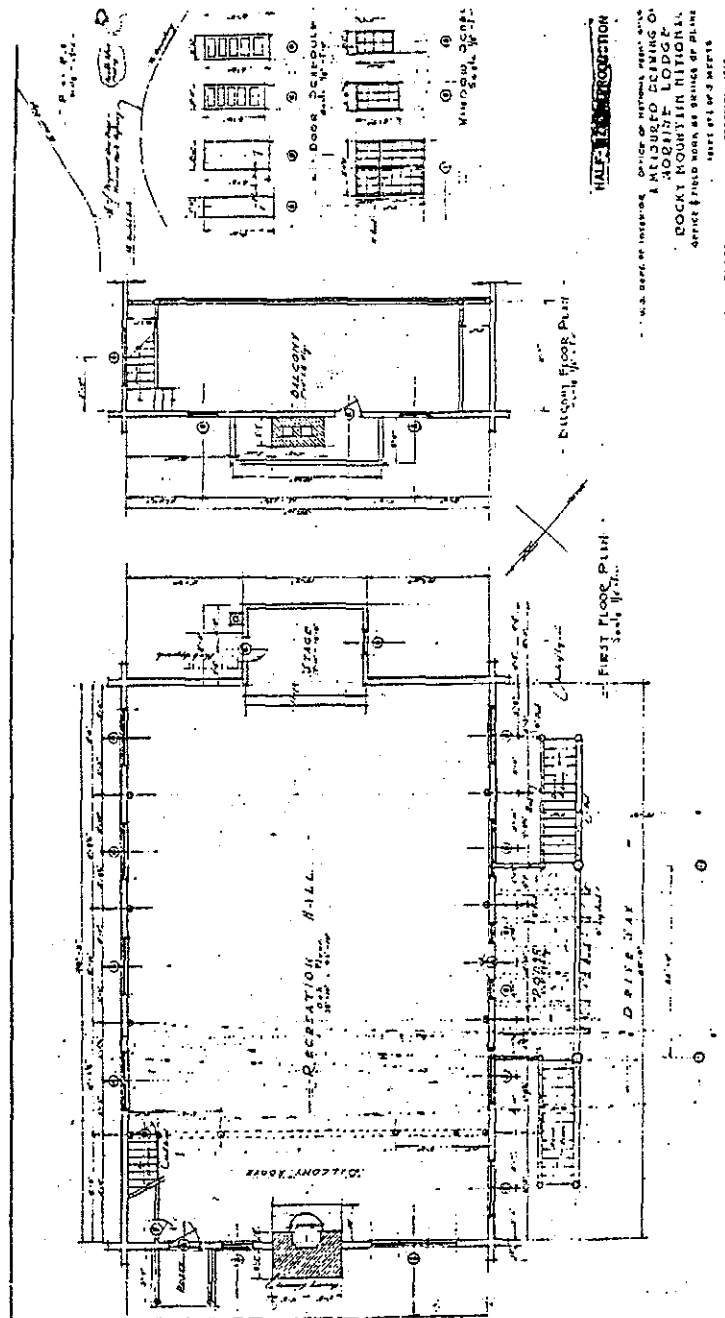
PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Atkins, D. Ferrel. "National Register of Historic Places Inventory--Nomination Form: Moraine Lodge/Moraine Park Visitor Center." Estes Park: National Park Service, Rocky Mountain National Park, July 9, 1975.

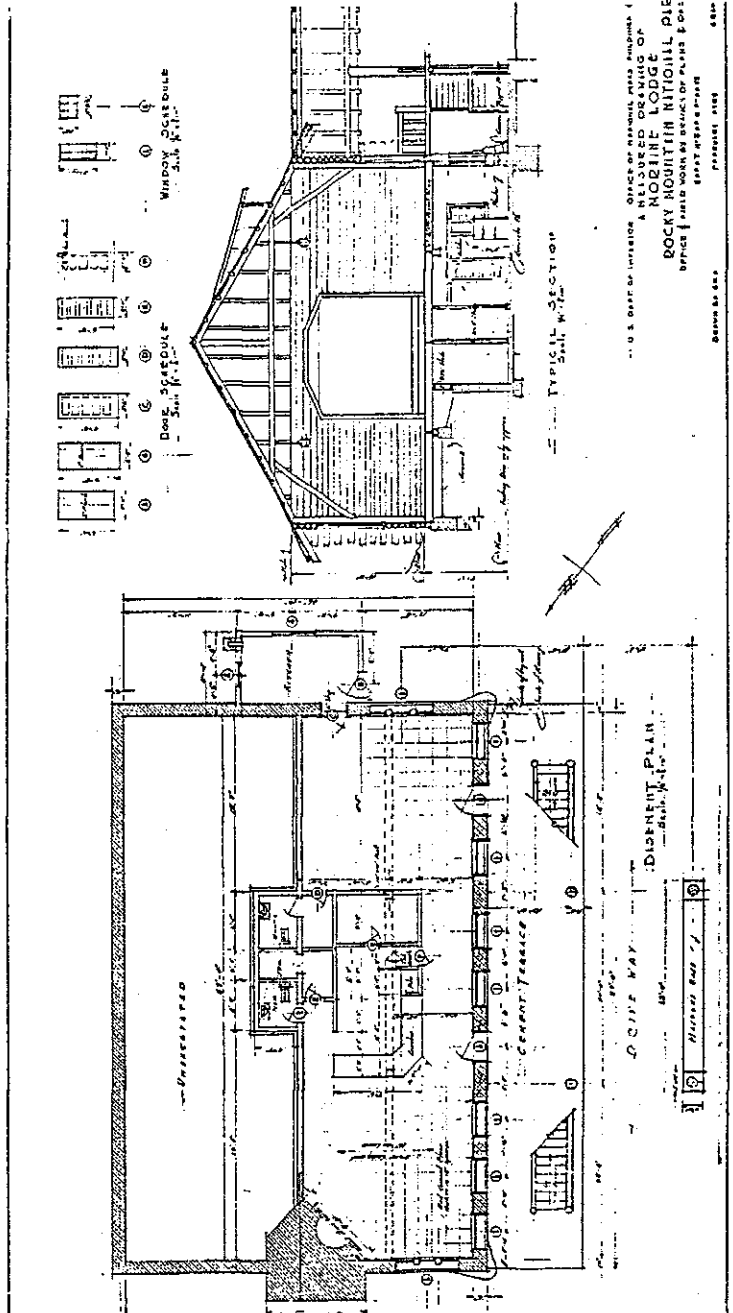
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Musselman, Lloyd Keith. "Rocky Mountain National Park, 1915-1965: an Administrative History." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Denver, 1969.

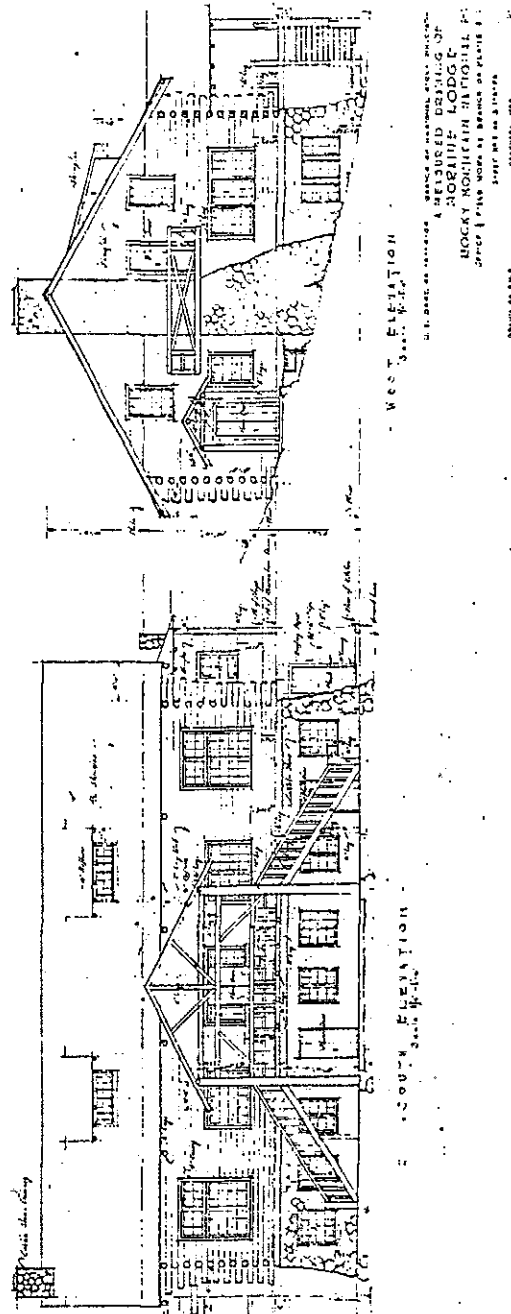
National Park Service. Measured Drawings of Moraine Lodge. Denver Service Center; Denver, CO, 1934, Microfiche.



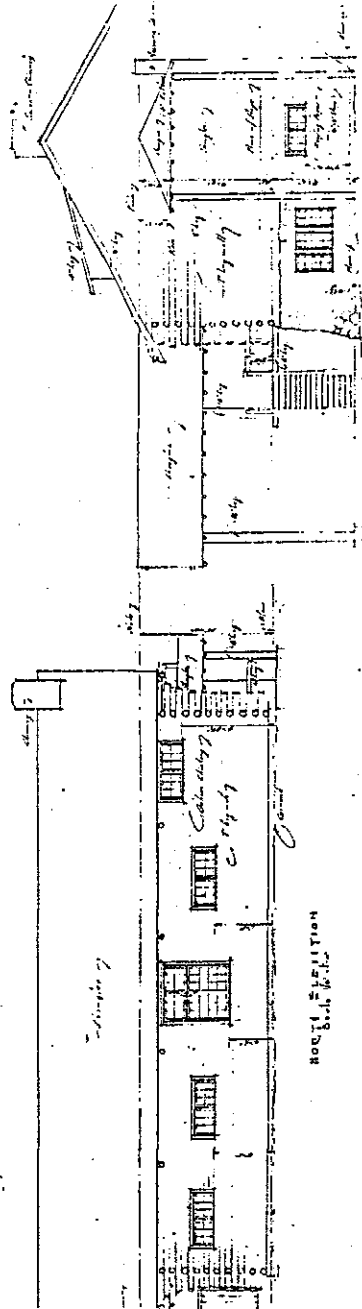
Taken from: National Park Service. Denver Service Center, Denver, CO, 1934.



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